

NEWS

Last of "Texas Seven" Nabbed at FSA Training Site

by Brenda Carlson, Southwest Regional Public Affairs Specialist

I imagine you're in a Colorado Springs, Colo. hotel attending January's FSA statewide disaster program training. After an arduous day of learning, you are kicking back in your hotel room. Suddenly, you get an urgent call from the hotel operator, directing you to vacate your room immediately due to a "security concern." Or, you are intercepted at your hotel room door by an armed SWAT team member who quickly escorts you to the hotel lobby.

A million things race through your mind. A bomb threat? A fire? A desperate prison inmate on the loose? Unfortunately, the third guess was correct! About 100 FSA employees just happened to be staying at the same Holiday Inn as two of the now infamous "Texas Seven."

The FSA employees couldn't have imagined this ominous scenario until they actually lived it. "It's ironic," says

Ron Ohlson, Yuma County CED. "On the drive out, a Program Technician had expressed her concern about attending training in the area where the first group of fugitives had been apprehended. I had consoled her by saying that the remaining two would be two states away by now."

As it turns out, the two remaining fugitives, Patrick Murphy, Jr. and Donald Newbury, were not two *states* away, but just two *doors* down from Ohlson's hotel room! "I must have walked up and down the hall past their door several times," says Ohlson. Little did Ohlson know that the room not only housed the convicts, but 10 handguns and 2 sawed-off shotguns as well. Ohlson says, "The situation was handled professionally by law enforcement and hotel staff. I was never really concerned for my own safety."

FSA employees began arriving at the Holiday Inn before noon on January

23rd. By 10 p.m., law enforcement officials had evacuated several blocks of rooms. According to *The Denver Post*, officials were acting on a tip received from a Holiday Inn clerk who remembered checking in a man who appeared suspicious. Authorities later identified the man as Patrick Murphy, Jr.

During the hotel evacuation, guests were escorted to the hotel restaurant where they were treated to complimentary food and beverages until they were allowed to return to their rooms the following morning at 4:30 a.m. Police took Murphy, a convicted rapist, and Newbury, a convicted robber, peacefully into custody at 3:45 a.m.

Merle Venezio, Bent County CED, whose hotel room was across the hall from the prison escapees, was relieved when the two were apprehended without incident. "I kept asking myself, why would these men surrender peacefully? They have nothing to lose." Although she says she wasn't afraid as the drama unfolded, Venezio admits, "When thinking back, I realize the magnitude of the situation and it's frightening."

Life will go on in Colorado. Most of the prisoners have been extradited to Texas and, eventually, the "Texas Seven" will be a distant memory. But for many Colorado FSA employees, their brush with danger and the knowledge of "what could have happened" will not soon be forgotten.

Bent County, Colo., CED Merle Venezio (center) speaks with reporters from *Rocky Mountain News* (left) and *Newsweek* about the harrowing incident.



A COLUMN FROM USDA SECRETARY ANNE VENEMAN

The following are excerpts from our new USDA Secretary Ann. M. Veneman's remarks at the Agricultural Outlook Forum on February 22. This is her first public address as USDA Secretary and an opportunity for her to express her vision on agriculture policy.

It is a tremendous honor to have been chosen by President Bush to serve in his Cabinet. I am working hard to assemble a talented and dedicated team at USDA to help deliver on the priorities the President has outlined as they pertain to agriculture.

We will work with Congress to provide a safety net for farmers that moves toward a more market-based economy. Consolidation and mergers in the food sector are forcing new strategies for operations and production in all sectors of the food chain.

There are some encouraging signs in global commodity markets. But other factors will continue to strain some parts of the farm economy. Rising prices for fuel, electricity, natural gas and fertilizer are increasing farm production costs at a time when many commodity prices remain weak.

The dollar remains strong by historical standards, which helps keep inflation

at bay here, but reduces the competitiveness of U.S. exports. And world commodity trade remains sluggish, despite improvements in many countries' economies.

Technology is changing production and marketing of food and fiber. Improvements in transportation, storage and food technology mean more fresh food can be moved further and faster at lower costs. Information technology is being used to generate new efficiencies throughout the food chain.

The potential of biotechnology will drive changes in the food system through products that make farmers more productive and consumers more healthy and satisfied. And technology is providing farmers new tools to reduce costs and adopt practices that solve environmental problems.

The combination of globalization, technology, and ever-demanding consumers means a more tightly connected food chain with stronger linkages among producers, processors and retailers. Evolution of the new food system may be viewed in different ways, but ultimately, requires new relationships and new thinking.

In some cases, there are large farmers with the capital and the scale of production needed to get started. In other cases, farmers have joined together to create scale by forming partnerships or other business alliances. For example, 1,100 durum farmers formed the Dakota Growers Pasta Company to manufacture from their own production. Small farm operators all over the country are successfully producing organic and specialty crops for niche markets, up-scale restaurants and farmers markets.



In this current environment, government cannot force solutions. But as we look to the next Farm Bill, we should consider new approaches to policy development. Traditionally, interested parties have independently presented their views before Congress, often as competing interests. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Larry Combest has taken an important step by establishing a framework that encourages commodity groups to work together to develop Farm Bill proposals.

The next step could be a process that brings together commodity groups, general farm groups, processors, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers to find the best approach for all to succeed in the new, consumer driven food system.

We will focus our efforts in the coming months in key areas. First, we will seek opportunities to expand trade. We must pass presidential trade negotiating authority so that we can

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FSA Public Affairs Staff
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Stop 0506
Washington, DC 20250-0506

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enter into new market-opening agreements, including the Free Trade Area of the Americas and a new WTO agreement.

Second, technology development and adoption through research, education and extension are leading to new products, increased productivity, and more environmentally friendly farming. The nation needs new sources of clean, dependable energy and agriculture needs new markets -- a coincidence of needs upon which we should capitalize. Research into biomass technology could develop efficient fuels and other chemicals from virtually any plant or plant product.

We should step up development of new technologies for cost-effectively producing important fuels like ethanol, bio-diesel and other bioproducts that not only provide markets for products but have environmental benefits as well.

Third, our regulatory environment must not be so burdensome that it places undue costs on the farm economy.

Finally, it is important that farmers have in place an adequate economic safety net, which is consistent with a market-based farm economy. It is also important to achieve estate and income tax reforms that will assist farmers.

All these issues provide opportunities to build new coalitions throughout the industry. I will work with the Congress and State and local governments in helping move agriculture forward in this new, consumer-driven economy.

Ken Blanchard in his book, "Mission Possible" says, "If you are not involved today in creating tomorrow's markets, or knowledgeable about what's happening in these markets, you are unlikely to find yourselves competing in them." That, I think, neatly sums up the challenge before us.

Lady Landowner Day

by Christine Zeigler, Communications Coordinator, Missouri State Office

According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, 165,102 women operate farms in this country. This figure has grown significantly since the 1992 Census total of 145,156.

A number of female landowners in Missouri met last fall to see that this figure keeps growing. "Lady Landowner Day," held by Douglas/Ozark counties, was a cooperative effort by the USDA service center staffs, the local FSA County Office Committee (COC), and the minority advisor to the COC.

The event drew 53 attendees for discussions about the COC system and a question and answer session covering a wide variety of programs provided by seven different agricultural agencies. Event organizers handed out nomination forms for the COC election – a



great way to encourage more women farmers to become agricultural leaders in their communities!

"Lady Landowner Day" volunteers serve up a hot lunch to event participants.

Career Brochure Does the Job

by Trish Halstead, Communications Coordinator, Kansas State Office

As Chairperson of the Kansas State Office's Civil Rights/EEO Advisory Council, I often cover the FSA booth at local career fairs. I noticed that many visitors to our booth showed an interest in careers with FSA, but didn't know much about our Agency or how to apply. I suggested to

the Advisory Council that we put together a publication that covers field-level careers with FSA. The idea was approved and last summer the council developed a brochure.

This thorough brochure gives a description of duties for each position and what kinds of abilities are needed. It covers the benefits of FSA positions, like annual and sick leave, healthcare, retirement benefits, etc. The brochure also explains the different types of vacancy announcements, eligibility requirements, and application instructions. It lists several references for locating vacancy announcements as well as contacts in the Kansas State Office.

We first used the brochure at a Native American college's career fair that we attend every year. It helped to have something concrete to show the participants. Besides career fairs, we display the brochure at many other events, including farm shows and county fairs. CEDs also distribute the brochure when speaking at high schools.

We have gotten quite a favorable response to our career brochure. It's a great outreach tool!



Cover of Kansas State Office's career brochure.

A CULINARY TIMELINE

1894 - Iceberg lettuce is introduced commercially by the 18-year-old W. Atlee Burpee Company.



1896 - Tootsie Rolls are introduced in New York City. They are the first candy to be wrapped in paper.

1897 - Jell-O is introduced by a cough medicine manufacturer.

1898 - Campbell's Soups appear for the first time in cans with red and white labels.

1900 - The first Hershey bars are introduced.

1901 - Instant coffee is invented.



1903 - Tuna is canned for the first time.

1904 - French's Mustard is introduced by R. T. French Company of Rochester, New York.

Source: Lifestyle Magazine



One Youth's Recipe for Success

by Michael Kaufman, Regional Public Affairs Specialist

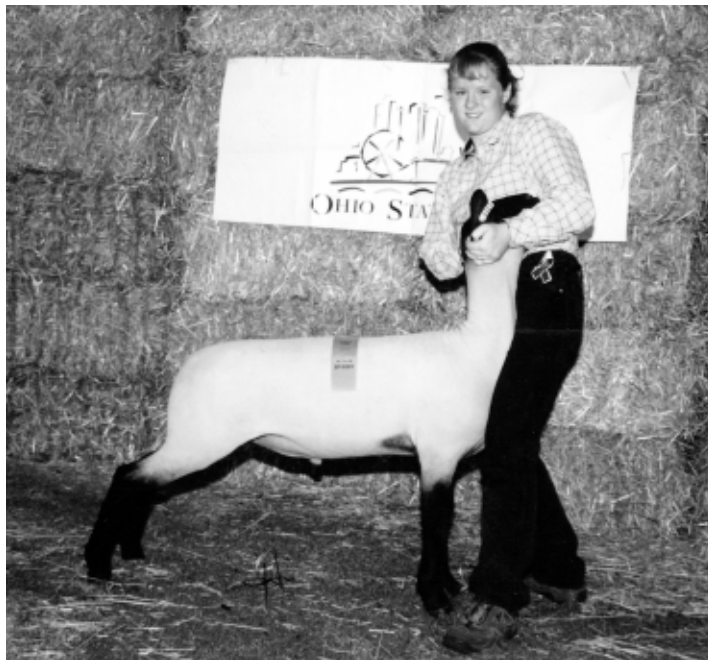
Periodically, a student distinguishes herself through diligence and notable accomplishments. Beth Cocklin is just such a student, thanks in part to FSA's rural youth loan program.

Cocklin has focused on agriculture since joining the 4-H in the fourth grade. She is now a senior at Wilmington High School in Clinton County, Ohio, and her agricultural interests have blossomed into managing numerous award-winning projects. She started by raising rabbits, lambs, and sheep. Now, through FFA, she works with cattle, swine, and specialty crops on her family's 5-acre farm.

Cocklin's careful planning and financial acumen in conjunction with FSA's youth loan program have spelled success. She has generated profitable projects and prize-winning FFA entries at the Clinton County Fair and Ohio State Fair. As a high school junior, Cocklin attained her Ohio State FFA degree, which requires students to have a minimum of \$7,000 of investment income. Cocklin credits the Clinton County FSA with helping her attain her degree by providing project financing, guidance, and encouragement.

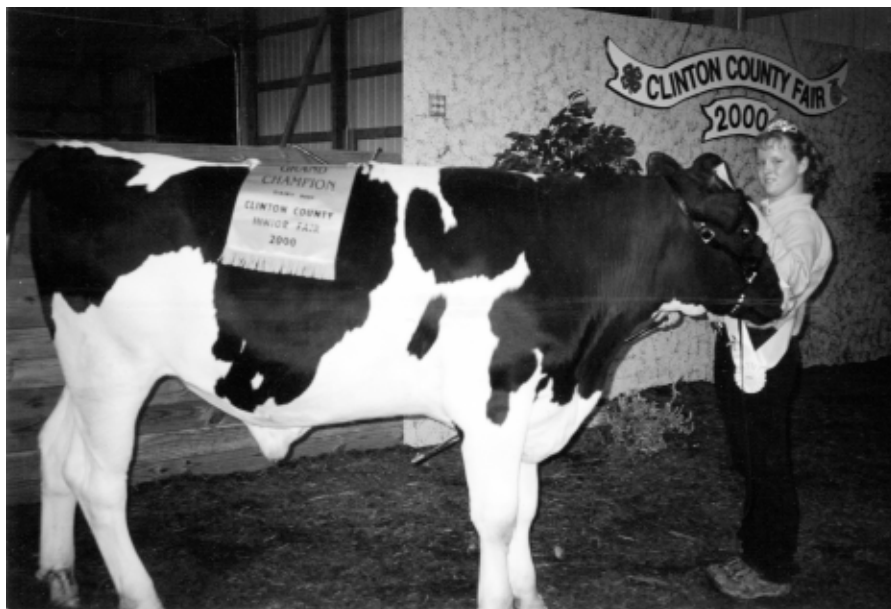
This enterprising teen supplements her agricultural income by working part-time at the local Liberty Savings Bank. She also excels as the current FFA chapter president. In her precious spare time, Cocklin organizes volunteer efforts within her community.

Cocklin has no plans to slow down. This fall, she is planning to attend a college with a strong agricultural business curriculum. Ohio FSA is proud of Cocklin's accomplishments and is confident she will continue her excellent



photos by Phyllis Cocklin

Beth Cocklin with this Holstein steer won Reserve Grand Champion in last summer's Clinton County Fair.



Cocklin with her sheep at the Ohio State Fair last summer. She won 4th place in the fair's highly competitive Suffolk Class sheep show.

work. FSA's youth loan program has helped one more young person pave the way toward a professional agricultural career.

Two Bright Lights in Oklahoma

by the FSA Okfuskee/Creek, Okla., County Farm Loan Programs Staff

Oklahoma FSA partners with several local agencies that provide training and experience for individuals wishing to enter the workplace. These agencies match participants with worksites like FSA. Two shining examples of program participants are Imogene Deibert and Alisa Douglas, both employed at the FSA Okfuskee/Creek County Office.

Since 1998, Imogene Deibert has worked with our office's farm loan pro-

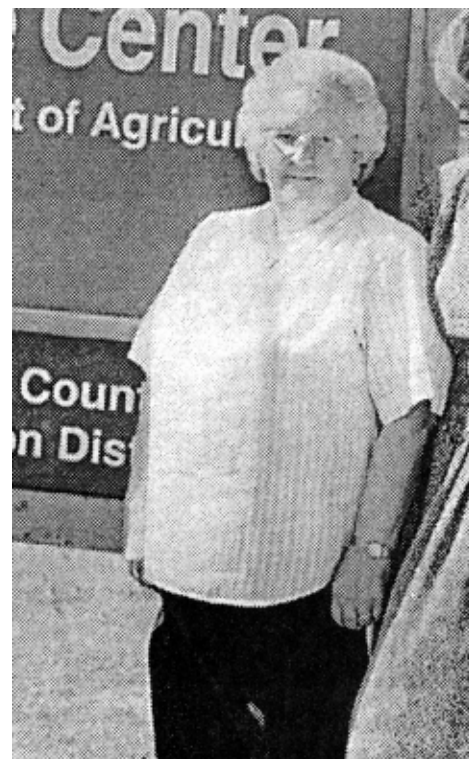
grams. We obtained Deibert through the Green Thumb Employee Training Program, which prepares older workers to enter modern workplaces with confidence as well as new skills.

Deibert is 70, but is not afraid to tackle new technology and meet the challenges of a busy office. She does word processing, computer backups, much of the typing, filing, supervised bank accounting, phone answering, and scheduling. This great grandmother is a valuable asset as she fills in when needed and keeps the other employees on their toes!

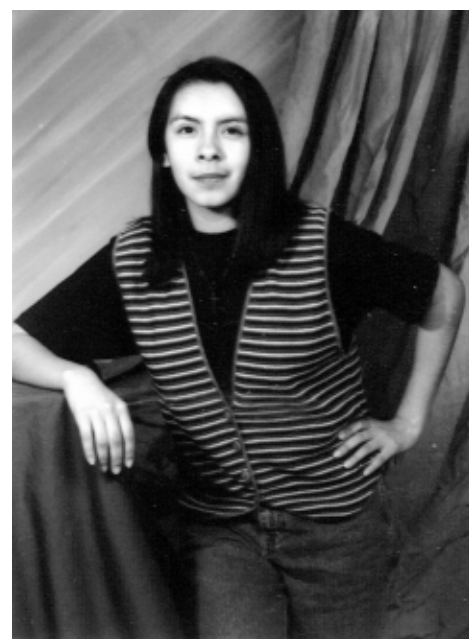
Another noteworthy work program in Oklahoma is the Creek Nation ETA. This program prepares young people for future careers by providing work experience and helping them develop healthy perspectives, strong work habits, and establish an employment record. Through Creek Nation, our staff was lucky to get the services of Alisa Douglas last summer.

Douglas helped with farm loans and farm programs. She worked on aerial maps, put together loan applications, and performed some computer tasks and clerical duties. We are happy to say that Douglas is currently a senior at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Okla., pursuing a degree in graphic design. Her enthusiasm in our office was contagious and we miss her.

Deibert and Douglas, with their energy and spirit, have been valuable assets to the Okfuskee/Creek office. Hats off to both employees and to the programs that led them to us!



Imogene Deibert.



Alisa Douglas.

FSA NEWS EVOLVES WITH THE TIMES

Look for changes to **FSA NEWS** in the upcoming months! FSA's Public Affairs Staff continually strives to keep employees current on Agency happenings in D.C. and around the Nation. As such, we plan to move toward a weekly web-based newsletter to keep up with the quick pace of today's news. Public Affairs is also developing an electronic subscription service containing newsletter links and other employee-pertinent information. We believe the weekly newsletter and electronic subscription service will offer employees the same high-quality, noteworthy Agency events and success stories, but in a more timely manner. Keep those articles coming!



Georgia Chairperson Gets Top Honor

James Lee Adams, Chairperson of the Georgia State FSA Committee, has won the prestigious Lancaster/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year award for 2000. Adams, of Camilla, Ga., is an agricultural leader in basic row crops, soybeans, and broiler farming.

Adams is known throughout the state for being an exceptionally creative farmer. In fact, he is in a whole different league when it comes to innovations! For instance, Adams has integrated alligators into his farm to eat dead chicken carcasses. He figures he has to dispose of the chickens somehow, so he puts them in the alligator pond and "recycles" them.

J. Thomas Ryan, of award co-sponsor Swisher International, says, "Adams is representative of the modern farmer who takes advantage of new technology and utilizes products that would be considered waste in many business ventures. He believes in promoting agriculture to the public and in working with both national and foreign governments to market and promote agricultural products."

Adams is flexible, as he has changed with the times in order to survive on his farm. His farm has been fully irrigated since 1972 and thus was able to thrive throughout Georgia's three years of drought.

For winning Farmer of the Year, Adams received a \$12,500 check, a year's supply of clothing, use of a tractor, a \$1,000 gift certificate, and a custom-made gun safe.



J. Thomas Ryan, Executive Vice President of Swisher International; James Lee Adams and his wife Sue; and Chip Blalock, Sunbelt Executive Director.

WHAT WERE THE ANCESTORS OF TODAY'S HORSES LIKE?

The family of animals that led to today's horses first became distinct about 50 million years ago. The first horses were fleet-footed plant eaters that lived in open forests and meadows. They were about the size of a small dog.

These "dawn horses" (Eohippus) were like a cross between a deer and a rabbit. They had toes on their feet rather than hooves, and their teeth were less specialized than those of today's horses. They lived in North America and Europe.



Over time, evolutionary forces caused horses to grow larger and more specialized for life in the wide-open spaces of the grasslands. The toes on their feet changed into a single hard toenail (the hoof) that is well adapted for running across the prairies, and they developed a digestive system able to handle large quantities of low-nutrient grasses.

Source: The Learning Kingdom

Program Technician Gets Lifesaving Gift

by Mary Kirby, Program Assistant, Illinois State Office

Monica Shepard once could only look toward a grim future. Shepard, a program technician in Schuyler County, Ill., and a diabetic, faced kidney failure and had resigned herself to dialysis. Then she got a phone call that saved her life.

The call was from Kay Crum, a local schoolteacher whom Shepard had known her whole life but wasn't particularly close to. Crum, hearing about Shepard's dire situation, offered her one of her own kidneys. Crum says as God led her in that direction, "It was like a no-brainer."

So, last July, orderlies at Memorial Medical Center rolled Shepard and Crum into adjoining operating rooms. Surgeons took a healthy kidney from Crum and implanted it in Shepard. Both women then spent four nights in the hospital. Thankfully, they recovered completely and both returned to work.

Shepard says there is no way for her to express her heartfelt gratitude to Crum, except that she will feel indebted to Crum the rest of her life. "She's my angel; she gave me a second chance at life," says Shepard.



Monica Shepard (left) and Kay Crum reign as honorary parade marshals in the "Smiles Day" local parade last fall.

Answers to February's Puzzle

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
Month of March		Women's History Month
Month of March		National Peanut Month
March 1-3	Kansas City, Mo.	Alex King, Acting Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to meet with Kansas City officials

Note: The above is subject to change.